

Ag Day...from Page 1A

for the rest of their lives, and some of them, it may lead to a job or lead to some kind of career. And that's got to be what it's about."

The FFA is a student-run organization that serves as the leadership and career development aspect of the high school's agriculture program. As a part of that program, students experience a three-pronged approach to agricultural education: classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experience and the FFA.

Plans are in the works to hold another auction this fall, and the FFA hopes to make it an even greater success than Saturday's event.

Nelson's Tractor also brought people out to the market Saturday with its John Deere Drive Green event. FFA students assisted with the equipment demonstrations, which included the test-driving of lawn mowers, commercial mowers, compact tractors, full-sized utility tractors and Gators.

"Most of the time we



have demonstrations at the dealership, but this time we thought we would pair it with the Farmers Market and the auction so that we could actually all three draw off each other's customers, and you give people more reasons to come to the event," said Will Nelson, owner of Nelson's Tractor.

More than 20 Farmers

Market vendors made their wares available Saturday, according to Market Manager Mickey Cummings. Many in attendance took advantage of the wide variety of vendors' homegrown and handmade goods.

Vickie and Jimmy McClure of McClure's Snack Shack loaned the use of their mobile kitchen to UCHS stu-



dents, who sold food and refreshments to raise funds for a STEM Lab at the schools next year.

Annette Hoppood and Joe Garner of the Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen's Association attended the Ag Day festivities, showing their support for the students of FFA and promoting the upcoming "Beef It Up" event planned for

the market's opening day of June 6th.

Last year, the association served free beef to more than 500 visitors at the Union County Farmers Market for its "Beef It Up" event.

Moving forward, the Farmers Market looks to host an Ag Day event this time every year.

"I'm amazed at the or-

ganization and how much they've got here, how much equipment for auction and all of the people here," said Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris.

"We're just excited that we've found yet another great purpose for the Farmers Market to provide assistance to our farmers and the community," Paris said.

Stone gets an upclose look at the Mountain Regional Library System

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Vince Stone began his tenure as director of the Mountain Regional Library System at the beginning of March, and so far, he is enjoying the job.

"I love it," said Stone. "It's real different from being at a school library, but I like the administrative part of it, and I'm getting a lot of good help here in the beginning. Change is never easy, but everybody is being very cooperative and helpful, and everybody wants the library to succeed - we want all the libraries to succeed."

Much of Stone's career has taken place within the business realm, where he served as marketing director for an audio/visual company for many years before starting his own audio/visual company with friends.

The rise of digital



Vince Stone

downloads put pressure on his industry because he worked mainly with CDs and DVDs, so he decided it was time to make a career change. Five years ago, he went back to school to earn his second master's degree, this one in library sciences from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and he has since been the librarian of a large middle school and

an elementary school.

"What got me this job was not just my librarian degree, but it was my business experience, because I had run large businesses in the past and had dealt with human resources things, had dealt with marketing issues, communications issues," said Stone.

Stone comes to the library system at a time of great change. Donna Howell recently stepped down as director after 25 years of leadership experience within the system. She has maintained an active role in helping Stone to transition into his new position.

Also on the agenda for Stone is a massive \$1,000,000 renovation project at Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris.

Commissioner Bill Kendall championed the SPLOST referendum that allocated \$100,000 toward a local match incentive to secure the \$900,000 state grant to

fund the rest of the renovation.

The Towns County Public Library was renovated last year using the same match and grant program.

Currently, Stone hopes to have design plans and bids for architects accepted for Mountain Regional Library by the end of summer, in which case the library will move into a temporary facility so that construction can begin. Once begun, the renovation should take between six and eight months to complete.

"We've got faulty lighting, we're on a septic tank, because the building was built in 1978," said Stone. "So, we have to tie in to the city sewer. We've got some parking issues and some things like that that have to be renovated. And when we're done, I think it's going to be wonderful."

"We've got some really cool ideas that I can't share now because I've got to

get things approved through boards and whatnot, and they may change everything. But once we have our plan, we're really going to promote the plan to the community, post pictures of the designs on the website and things of that nature so everybody knows what's coming."

At the end of the day, Stone would like people to understand that he is not there to reinvent the wheel, but more to grease the bearings.

"What I have found out is that when things are running smoothly, the last thing you want to do is come in there and shake things up - you want things to continue," said Stone. "So, I'm not here to as much change what they're already doing, but I want to enhance what they're already doing. That's a long process, to learn what kind of services we're already doing, what kind of services might we want to do in the future,

which populations really are in the most need, and address those and try to be creative in how we do that."

Stone hails from Cleveland, Tenn., and is a family man with his wife, three children and two grandchildren. He is a successfully published author, and his best-selling book, "Embracing Your Inner Mediocrity: Making Peace With Reality," landed him a couple of interviews on the Fox News Channel show Fox and Friends.

He has also written several novels based on the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament aimed at young adults.

Stone plans to utilize his creative talents to launch a brand new website for the MRLS in the next couple of months. The MRLS includes the two libraries in Towns County, Union County Public Library and Fannin County Public Library.

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